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SQUAW OF BEAR CLAW



By

Evangeline
M.
Lent

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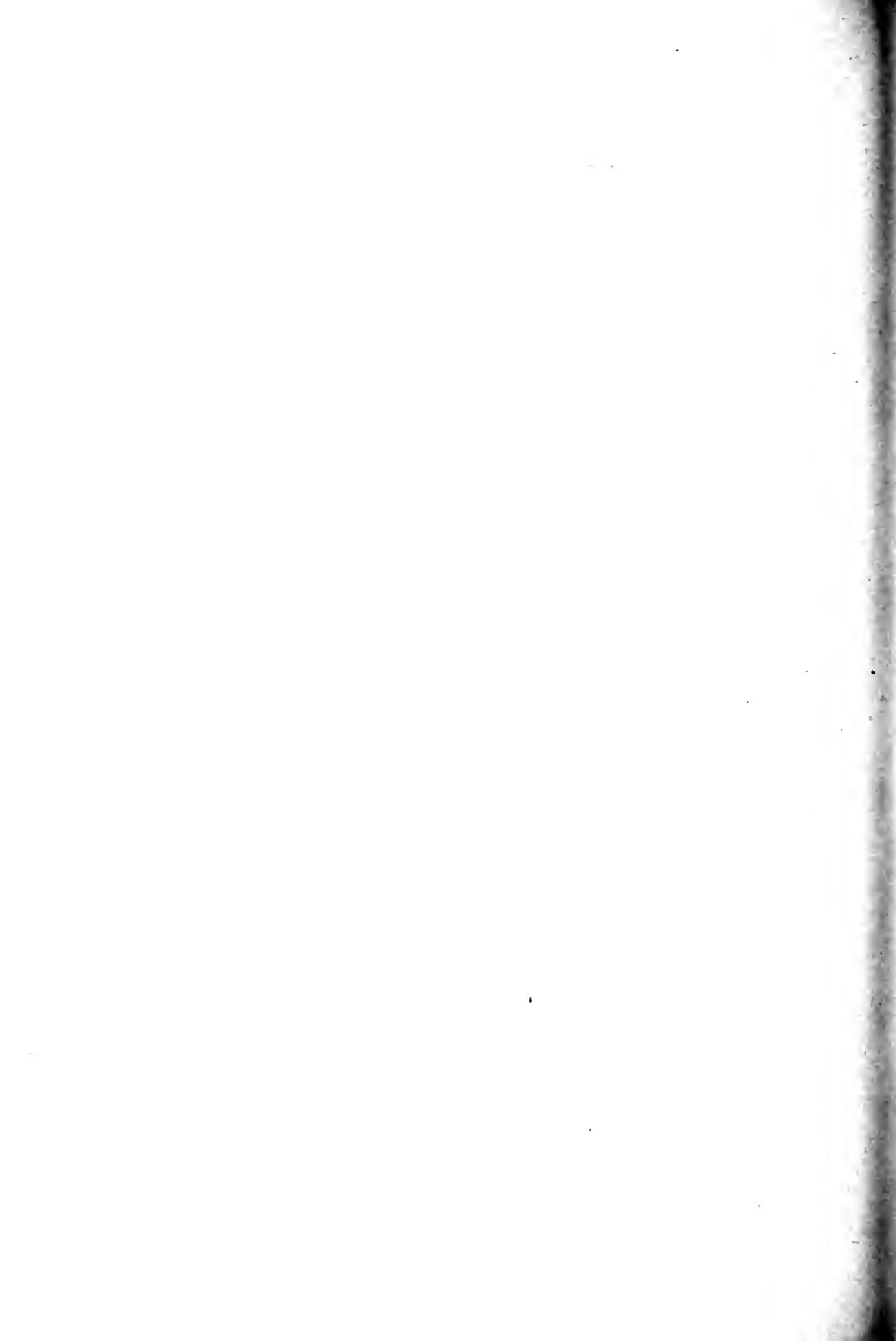


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SQUAW OF BEAR CLAW

Dramatic Indian Play in One Act for 3m. 1f.

*Founded on "Wasula," monologue for a woman,
by the same author*

BY

EVANGELINE M. LENT

*"Greater love hath no man than this, that
a man lay down his life for his friends."*
NEW TESTAMENT.



PRICE, 25 CENTS.

EDGAR S. WERNER & COMPANY
NEW YORK

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NOTE

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THIS play deals with Indian conditions in the 19th Century, when the Indian stood near the threshold of civilization, when he was succumbing to White-man influence, yet clinging with wonderful childlike loyalty to his own methods of life and traditions.

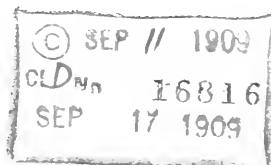
The sketch is based on two radical facts, viz., the Indian's ability to practice and appreciate friendship, and his unwavering faith in the Higher Powers which govern nature and control his destiny.

The Indian religion has been handed down orally from unknown ancestors, who inhabited the deserts and mountains of North America,—eons, perhaps, before the advent of the Cliff-Dwellers. The Indian is a pantheist. He worships all nature. He frequently makes sacrifices to certain elements, animals, and objects, to appease their wrath and thereby protect from disaster himself, his land, and his crops. To other elements, animals and objects, he makes known his needs; and, as self-imposed payment for their favor, surrenders unbegrudgingly his few treasures and possessions. These sacrifices are followed by absolute faith that his prayer will be answered.

Every act in a devout Indian's life (and the majority of Indians were devout before the advent of White-man fire-water and graft) was a religious symbol.

The United States sends to every reservation a man called an Agent to act as counselor for the Indians. The Government has often been unfortunate in these appointments.

The White Man and his Red Brother are grateful to those men who have filled the office of Indian Agent worthily.



SQUAW OF BEAR CLAW.

CHARACTERS.

HORACE KNOX, Agent of an Indian Reservation.

BEAR CLAW, Arizona Indian.

EVENING STAR, Indian runner.

WASULA, Squaw of Bear Claw.

DESCRIPTION OF CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES.

HORACE KNOX: Man of medium size, age about forty; light brown hair and beard; shrewd, egotistical, uncouth. His manner toward Indians throughout play is indifferent, insolent. He wears rough riding trousers, flannel shirt, heavy leather belt, holster, moccasins; large silver ring, containing turquoise.

BEAR CLAW: Large, thick-set Indian, age about fifty; black hair, parted and worn in two short braids. His eye is lynx-like. His manner is formidable, suspicious; his voice deep-toned, severe. He wears ill-fitting, ankle-length trousers, calico blouse worn outside of trousers, over this a cloth waist-coat. Around head and across forehead is tied a calico handkerchief, twisted in a long strip. A round felt hat. Strings of beads and buffalo teeth around neck. Moccasins. He carries an old-fashioned pistol. Over costume he wears a blanket.

EVENING STAR: A lithe young Indian of poetic type; black hair, hanging loosely about shoulders. Tied around head and across forehead is a rattlesnake skin. He wears loose-fitting

trousers which do not reach ankles, a loose shirt, unfastened at throat. No hose; moccasins, blanket.

WASULA: Young Indian matron; unsophisticated, loyal. In manner she occasionally reveals traces of Mexican fore-fathers. She wears an ankle-length skirt of dark-colored woolen cloth or calico. Loose-fitting waist of same material, preferably of different pattern, worn outside of skirt. Moccasins. A necklace of Mexican design around neck, and several strings of beads. A silver bracelet and silver ring, of Indian workmanship, containing matrix turquoises. Black hair can be worn in knot at back of head as in picture, or in two braids. Over costume she wears a Navajo blanket.

Avoid use of "Stage-Indian" costumes.

TIME: Midnight.

SCENE: *Interior of Indian-Agent's house in Southwest of the United States. Room is roughly, scantily, furnished. There are doors, Center Flat and Right I. Windows, Right Flat and Left I. Moonlight is seen outside. A common wooden table, diagonally across Left Center. On table are scattered writing materials, ledgers, official letters, etc.; a lighted kerosene lamp, Left end; whisky-flask, and pistol, Right end. A couch covered, with Navajo blanket, up Right corner of stage; trunk, up Left corner; Chairs, above table and up Right Center; Navajo blanket on floor, Right Center; pair of riding boots under table; Indian blankets and baskets are hung on walls. A shelf, Right II., on which are a small mirror, comb and brush, tobacco-jar, and old-fashioned striking clock. The occasional introduction of appropriate music is advised.*

At rise of curtain, KNOX is discovered tilting back in chair, feet on table. He is smoking a long-stemmed Indian-pipe, reading a newspaper. Clock strikes twelve.

He looks toward shelf, Right, throws down newspaper; business with writing materials. Sound is heard as of some one trying to unlatch door. He listens, rises, goes to door, Right, listens, returns to table. Pauses. A gentle knock is heard, followed by several louder knocks.

WASULA.

[Speaking off. She speaks, as she does throughout the play, in semimonotone, pronouncing the words syllable by syllable, slurring over final consonants.] Open door! Open door! Open door!

[With calm deliberation KNOX lays pipe on table, takes pistol, goes up Center. Opens door.]

KNOX.

[With impatience.] What you want here this time of night?

WASULA.

[She has slipped in and leans against wall R. of door. She attempts to conceal her fatigue and struggle for breath. She is enveloped in a blanket; only her eyes, nose and mouth are visible.]

KNOX.

[Severely.] I've told you Indians to quit prowling around nights. I won't have it. Understand?

WASULA.

[Ignoring his brusqueness.] You, Mr. (Meest) Horace Knox?

KNOX.

That's me.

WASULA.

Agent, Reservation?

KNOX.

Sure, and I'm boss. Understand?

WASULA.

Me, Wasula, Squaw Bear Claw.

KNOX.

[*Irritably. Goes D. to table.*] Well, what of it?

WASULA.

[*Goes slowly D. C.*] Ride long trail, black night. Come tell Mr. Knox, no send prison Evening Star.

KNOX.

[*Sarcastically.*] That so? Expect me to let off that scalliwag Indian horse-thief? [*Replaces pistol on table.*]

WASULA.

[*Indignantly.*] Evening Star no horse-thief!

KNOX.

Ain't he? He rode down here last night on Joe Carter's prize pony.

WASULA.

[*Loudly, decisively.*] No! Wasula say, no! Evening Star no steal White-man pony.

KNOX.

Go 'long home. I've got no time to listen to d——n Indian lies.

WASULA.

[*Haughtily.*] You listen Wasula, granddaughter Chief Big Knife, granddaughter Mexico woman. You listen Wasula, Squaw Bear Claw.

KNOX.

[*Business with pipe, blows smoke insolently.*] Humph!

WASULA.

Evening Star Wasula friend. When she little child he bring white rabbit skin. She big little child, bring wolf-tooth. One day kill rattlesnake, save life Wasula. Last night Evening Star save life Wasula papoose. [*Blanket slips from head.*]

KNOX.

What the devil are you talking about?

WASULA.

[*Hopelessly.*] Me speak bad English. [*Impulsively.*] Mr.

Knox, try understand! Papoose much sick. Medicine Man much far, hunt cattle. Bear Claw no near home-lodge, go trader's lodge, trade basket. Wasula alone. Black night Storm Spirit on war-path Wasula pray Great Mystery no make papoose dead. Wasula pray Wasula pray.

KNOX.

[*Sneers. Sits behind table.*] Ha!

WASULA.

[*With ardor.*] Thunder Bird hear prayer. Open fire eye, mountain, mesa, lodge, all light! Thunder Bird speak,—“Wasula go lodge, Evening Star. Tell Evening Star ride much fast, Agent-man lodge, bring White-man medicine.” [*Goes R.C. Reverently.*] Wind Spirit take feet of Wasula, lodge Evening Star. Me say, “Papoose much sick. Thunder Bird tell Evening Star ride Agent-man lodge, bring medicine!” Evening star fall on face. He say, “No can obey Thunder Bird. Me *run*. No ride, me no pony.” Me say, “Thunder Bird say *ride*.” He stand up, speak, “Much fast yellow pony, brown spot, White-man ranch, Wolf Canyon. Evening Star *ride*!” He take pepper, corn meal, run from lodge.

KNOX.

Down to Joe Carter's and caught all the boys napping!

WASULA.

[*Ignoring the interruption.*] Wasula go home-lodge. Much rain, much black. Far down trail Evening Star give red pepper, corn meal, sing prayer, Spirit Father. Wasula wait long night. Storm Spirit go. Sun Spirit come, touch high mountain, touch mesa, touch papoose. [*Pauses. KNOX ignores her. In distance there is heard cry of coyote.*] Wasula look! Lodge door, stand Bear Claw. Bear Claw speak, “White-man medicine, saddle, pony.”

KNOX.

Curse that medicine; got me up in the middle of the night.

WASULA.

[With exultation.] Spirit Father, hear prayer. Papoose eat medicine. Papoose no dead. Wasula much happy. Wasula grind corn. Wasula sing prayer. [Squats on floor R. C.; becomes absorbed in remembrance of scene which she describes. When speaking for BEAR CLAW she assumes critical, suspicious expression and uses deep, severe tone.] Bear Claw snow eye watch Wasula. Mr. Knox have know Bear Claw?

KNOX.

Know Bear Claw? Most cantankerous Indian on the Reservation.

WASULA.

[Thoughtfully.] Big, wild like buffalo. Jealous like snake. Me say, "Must give present, Thunder Bird. He tell how get medicine. Wasula no can leave alone papoose. Thunder Bird say Evening Star go.

[With affection and gratitude.] Evening Star soon come back." Bear Claw hold gun much hard. Speak cold like Winter Storm Spirit. He say, "Evening Star no come back. Steal pony. Agent-man lock in room, Agent-man lodge. To-morrow send over mountain, White-man prison."

KNOX.

That's straight.

WASULA.

[Rises to her knees; blanket slips off to her waist. Appalled.] Over mountain, prison!

KNOX.

[Unsympathetically.] To the Fort prison, and good riddance. He almost busted my door in last night.

WASULA.

[Affectionately.] Evening Star come ask medicine, Wasula papoose.

KNOX.

[*Vindictively.*] Then out of the night popped Bear Claw, recognized the yellow and brown pony, and let out a few blazed remarks about that Indian runner.

WASULA.

[*Rises C.*] Me know! Bear Claw tell Wasula what he tell Agent-man.

KNOX.

[*Maliciously.*] So, Evening Star steals White-men's *horses* and Red-men's SQUAWS!

WASULA.

When Bear Claw say Evening Star thief, Wasula no more feel peace like Indian woman. Wasula much angry like Mexico grandmother. Me say, "Evening Star never thief. Evening Star much good friend. Obey Thunder Bird, save papoose." Bear Claw speak, "Bear Claw save papoose. Bear Claw bring medicine. Take yellow pony, brown spot, White-man ranch, Wolf Canyon. White Man much thank Bear Claw, give present, fire-water, fish-rod." Me say, "How long Evening Star over mountain, prison?" Bear Claw smoke pipe long. He speak, "Much years. White Man no love bad Indian." Bear Claw take fish-rod, go far on mesa. Wasula think much long time. [*Impetuously.*] Wasula make go prison! Wasula make much years Evening Star no plant corn, no see Snake Dance, no run trail, lodge, Bear Claw!

KNOX.

[*Rises. Goes R. to shelf, business refilling pipe.*] Your fault! Bosh! No one's fault but his own.

WASULA.

[*With suppressed emotion.*] Wasula tie eagle feather, blanket papoose, keep 'way Evil Spirit. Wasula catch pony, Bear Claw. Ride Mr. Knox lodge, ask free life Evening Star. [*Meditatively.*] Then Wasula go long journey, Land Great Mystery. [*Prophetically.*] Bear Claw

jealous like snake. Follow footprint pony, kill Wasula.

KNOX.

You'd better be starting for home if you expect to have your lord and master's breakfast ready on time.

WASULA.

[Goes R. C.] Where, Evening Star?

KNOX.

[With pipe indicates door, R. WASULA starts toward R.; he waves her back.] Locked.

WASULA.

[Pleadingly.] Mr. Knox, let go Evening Star to his people! Evening Star die far from Red Brother! Die far from Sun Spirit. Evening Star, Wasula brave friend!

KNOX.

[Laughs derisively.] Ha! Ha!

WASULA.

[With innocent surprise.] Why you laugh?

KNOX.

Friend? [Goes R. of her.] Fiddlesticks! [Goes to table.] That long-legged Indian in there is your lover.

WASULA.

[Aghast.] Wasula lover?

KNOX.

That's it. Friendship, gratitude, be blowed! You've sneaked out in the night to Evening Star.

WASULA.

No!

KNOX.

If I let him out now you'd desert your husband and baby.

WASULA.

No!

KNOX.

You'd skip with Evening Star.

WASULA.

[Pauses.] Evening Star no Wasula lover. When . . . Wasula . . . dead, . . . Mr. Knox . . . believe . . . Wasula . . . speak truth?

KNOX.

[Sits at table, assorts certain papers into a pile. Impatiently.] Go on home, now. Go 'long,—understand? I'm d——n sleepy.

WASULA.

[Throws herself across table.] Open door! Give free life, Evening Star!

KNOX.

Get up.

WASULA.

Evening Star no mean steal pony.

KNOX.

[Drags her from table.] Get up and get out!

WASULA.

[Leans against R. end of table.] No send prison Evening Star!

KNOX.

[Shouts.] I'm not the Government! [Less loudly.] And neither of us has got use for horse-thieves. Understand?

WASULA.

Go—ver—munt no give Mr. Knox power pardon Evening Star?

KNOX.

No!

WASULA.

[Goes R. Pauses. With inspiration.] Missionary tell Wasula White-man Great Spirit much power, White-man Great Spirit more big than Go—ver—munt. [Stands C., arms uplifted. Prayerfully.] Manitou, hear prayer, Wasula. Speak much loud voice, make listen White-man Great Spirit. Wasula pray free life,

Evening Star. Wasula give present. What present White-man Great Spirit want? [Pauses. *With disappointment.*] He no answer. Me speak bad English. [Pleadingly.] Mr. Knox, speak message, good nice English. Say Wasula give big much present. What he want?

KNOX.

[*He scrutinizes her from head to foot. His facial expression shows a malicious scheme dawning in his thought.*] A sacrificial offering, eh?

WASULA.

What present he tell Wasula give?

KNOX.

[*He slowly goes D. L., turns back to WASULA. He is deciding whether or not to carry out his scheme.*] A sacrificial offering!

WASULA.

[*She watches him reverently for she believes him to be praying.*] White-man Great Spirit hear prayer?

KNOX.

Yes.

WASULA.

Give power Mr. Knox no send prison Evening Star?

KNOX.

Yes.

WASULA.

What present he want?

KNOX.

[Pauses.] Your blanket.

WASULA.

[*Removes blanket happily, puts it on floor D. C.*] Blanket? Blanket, Wasula father, present, Navajo chief.

KNOX.

[Pauses.] Your bracelet.

WASULA.

[*Repeats business.*] Bracelet? Bracelet, turquoise, Arizona.



KNOX.

[Pauses.] Your ring.

WASULA.

[Repeats business.] Ring? Nice ring. Wasula mother.

KNOX.

Your beads.

WASULA.

[Hesitates, prompted by fear.] Bead? All bead?

KNOX.

The whole blamed lot.

WASULA.

[With trepidation.] Bear Claw give. Bear Claw tell Wasula no never lose. [Heroically adds beads to heap.] All bead.

KNOX.

And that necklace.

WASULA.

[Aghast.] White-man Great Spirit tell Mr. Knox he want Wasula necklace? Necklace, Mexico grandmother, keep 'way Evil Spirit.

KNOX.

[Glances toward door R.] The necklace, or—

WASULA.

[Adds necklace to heap.] Wasula give necklace. [Triumphantly.] Now, White-man Great Spirit give power Mr. Knox, no send prison Evening Star?

KNOX.

[Gruffly.] Yes. [Looks down at head with satanic satisfaction, slowly takes bunch of keys from pocket, selects key.]

WASULA.

[Goes L. C. Watches him with interest and child-like confidence.] Key? Key, open door?

KNOX.

[*He glances down at heap with satisfaction as he goes to door R. Is about to open door; stops.*] Changed your mind about your stuff?

WASULA.

Wasula give, Wasula no take back.

KNOX.

[*Unlocking door, with insinuation.*] Reckon when he gets out of here your friend is likely to have a score to settle with Bear Claw. [Exits.]

WASULA.

[*With apprehension.*] Bear Claw jealous like snake.

KNOX.

[*Off. Severely.*] Hey there, get up! Come out of that corner, you rascal. I'm going to let you go. Get out of here quick. Understand? You're free!

EVENING STAR.

[*Pauses. He glides in from R. When he reaches C., discovers WASULA. They stare at each other several moments in silence. WASULA stands rigidly L. C. until after his exit. He starts U. C. KNOX appears at door R., watches them with patronizing suspicion.*]

WASULA.

[*Discovers KNOX. Peremptorily.*] No!

EVENING STAR.

[*Stops, awaits her command.*]

WASULA.

[*Points D. L.*] Window. No, go home-lodge.

EVENING STAR.

[*Obediently goes L.*]

WASULA.

Go desert. Wasula dead, Evening Star come back.

EVENING STAR.

[*Stares at her a moment, then agilely jumps out of window.*
 WASULA does not move.]

KNOX.

[*Goes to mantle, puts down pipe. Turns an occasional glance toward her. Winds clock.*] Well, Mrs. Bear Claw, about time we said Good Night, eh?

WASULA.

[*Holding position. As if taking a sacred vow.*] Wasula, Mr. Knox friend!

KNOX.

[*Watches her keenly. Goes R. of her. Puts his hand on her shoulder.*] Look here—— [*Is about to embrace her.*]

WASULA.

[*She looks at him, her face lighted by purity, gratitude, exultation.*] Mr. Knox much good White Man.

KNOX.

[*He is cowed by her look and words. Shivers, goes L., closes window.*] Brrr-rrr-rr! Night air's blame snappy. [*He stands at window looking out. WASULA stands over heap. BEAR CLAW is seen peering in through window R. F. Hold picture several seconds.*]

WASULA.

[*Looking down at heap.*] Bear Claw big wild like buffalo. [*Goes U. C., opens door C. F. BEAR CLAW stands on threshold.*] BEAR CLAW!

BEAR CLAW.

[*Threateningly.*] Why Squaw Bear Claw come White-man lodge, night? [*Pauses. KNOX goes below table, takes pile of official papers. BEAR CLAW takes few steps into room. WASULA R. of door.*] Why Squaw Bear Claw come Mr. Knox lodge, night?

WASULA.

[With sudden inspiration.] Medicine! Sick papoose, more medicine.

BEAR CLAW.

Medicine, sick papoose, much big lie. Wasula come speak Evening Star.

WASULA.

[Goes R. C.; pleadingly.] Mr. Knox, say Bear Claw, Evening Star no in lolge.

KNOX.

[Going R.; condescendingly.] That's right. If you don't believe it, come look for yourself. [Exits R. Takes papers.]

WASULA.

Mr. Knox speak truth. [Submissively.] Wasula follow Bear Claw, home-lodge.

BEAR CLAW.

[Discovers heap. With angry deliberation goes D. C. Speaks in English, in loud tone, with intent to be heard in adjoining room.] Why Squaw Bear Claw go 'way White-man lodge, no take blanket, bead, ring, bracelet? [She remains silent. He speaks passionately.] Bear Claw know! Wasula bad squaw! Wasula give present Mr. Knox!

WASULA.

[Vehemently.] Wasula no give present Mr. Knox.

BEAR CLAW.

[Incredulously.] Who for blanket, bead, bracelet, ring, necklace?

WASULA.

[Pauses. Stoically.] No tell! Me no tell!

BEAR CLAW.

[Quickly takes out pistol, points toward R., starts to cross stage.]

WASULA.

[She intercepts him, extends her arms horizontally.] No shoot

Mr. Knox! Wasula obey. Wasula, Squaw Bear Claw speak. [With an heroic effort.] Wasula give blanket, bead, bracelet, ring, necklace, *White-man Great Spirit*, for free life, Evening Star.

BEAR CLAW.

[Fires pistol at her heart.]

WASULA.

[Staggers backward. Speaks falteringly.] Bear Claw kill!

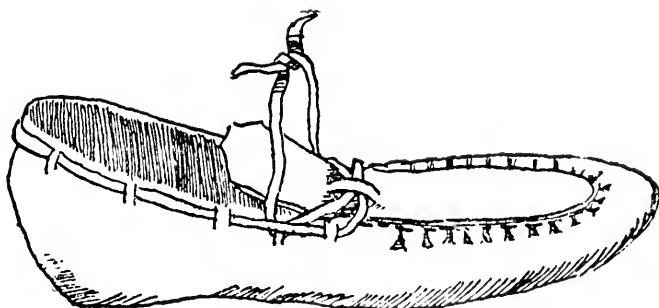
BEAR CLAW.

[Grunts with satisfaction. Starts to take articles on heap.] Humph!

WASULA.

[Staggers to heap, extends her arms over it protectingly.] NO TOUCH! No take blanket, necklace; Wasula give present, [drops on heap] White Man Great Spirit. [Look of resignation and peace passes over her face as she dies. BEAR CLAW stands with folded arms looking down at WASULA.]

[CURTAIN.]



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